

National Church Arson Task Force

United States Department of the Treasury  
United States Department of Justice  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

**First Year Report  
for the President**



June 1997



**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE**

P. O. Box 65798  
Washington, D.C. 20530

---

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

June 6, 1997

Dear Mr. President:

One year ago, you declared the investigation and prevention of church arsons to be a national priority and called upon all Americans to come together in a spirit of respect and reconciliation. Your three-pronged strategy to prosecute the arsonists, rebuild burned houses of worship and prevent additional fires has produced tremendous results.

Since June 1996, the National Church Arson Task Force (NCATF) has coordinated the efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement. To get a more complete picture of the arson problem, the Task Force determined it would investigate arsons going back to January 1995. Working with Congress, which provided additional resources and enacted the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996, governors of many states, private groups and individuals, we have achieved considerable success.

Today we are pleased to present our First Year Report of the NCATF. To date:

- The NCATF has launched 429 investigations into arsons, bombings or attempted bombings at houses of worship since January 1, 1995.
- Federal, state and local law enforcement have arrested 199 suspects since January 1995, in connection with 150 of the 429 investigations.
- The 35% rate of arrest in NCATF arson cases is more than double the 16% rate of arrest for arsons in general.

- Federal, state and local prosecutors have successfully convicted 110 defendants in connection with fires at 77 houses of worship since January 1995.

Under your direction, your Administration initiated and implemented a comprehensive response to these arsons. The primary mission of the Departments of Justice and the Treasury has been to investigate and prosecute the arsons. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has mounted an extensive prevention initiative, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development has joined in partnership with the National Council of Churches, the National Congress of Black Churches and others to rebuild burned churches across the nation. Also, the Justice Department's Community Relations Service has dispatched conflict resolution experts to help ease community tensions.

We wish to commend Assistant Secretary James E. Johnson and Acting Assistant Attorney General Isabelle Katz Pinzler, co-chairs of the Task Force, and former Assistant Attorney General Deval L. Patrick, a founding co-chair of the Task Force. The Task Force's success could not have been achieved without the dedicated work of the special agents of ATF and the FBI, prosecutors around the country, state and local law enforcement officials and others who have contributed to our efforts.

The attached report provides greater details on the progress of the Task Force's efforts. We would be pleased to brief you in more detail.

Respectfully,

Robert E. Rubin Janet Reno

Secretary of the Treasury Attorney General



**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE**  
P. O. Box 65798  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
**FIRST YEAR REPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT**

**"The only way we can succeed in the 21st century is  
if we unleash the full power of [our] convictions in...  
diversity and refuse to let anything divide or defeat us."**

**President William Jefferson Clinton, June 8, 1996**

## OVERVIEW

In early 1996, federal officials detected a sharp rise in the number of reported attacks on our nation's houses of worship, especially African American churches in the South. This trend troubled communities, challenged law enforcement agencies, and stirred the nation's conscience.

In June 1996, President Clinton formed the National Church Arson Task Force ("NCATF" or "Task Force"), made the investigation of these fires a top priority of federal law enforcement, and called on all Americans to come together in a spirit of respect and reconciliation.

The President directed his Administration to implement a strategy to (1) identify and prosecute the arsonists; (2) help communities rebuild the burned houses of worship; and (3) offer assistance in preventing more fires. Working with state and local law enforcement and private groups, federal officials achieved great success on these fronts. Significantly, many Americans came together as a result of these arsons, often independent of the federal effort, to lend assistance in many ways.

## PROSECUTIONS

- 429 Investigations Launched -- The NCATF has opened 429 investigations into arsons, bombings or attempted bombings that have occurred at houses of worship between January 1, 1995, and May 27, 1997.
- 199 Arrested -- Federal, state and local authorities have arrested 199 suspects since January 1995, in connection with 150 of the 429 investigations.
- 35% Solved -- The 35% rate of arrest in NCATF cases is more than double the 16% rate of arrest for arsons in general.
- 110 Convicted -- Federal and state prosecutors have successfully convicted 110 individuals in connection with fires at 77 houses of worship.

## REBUILDING

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is working closely with the National Council of Churches, the Congress of National Black Churches, Habitat for Humanity and other organizations in the rebuilding effort.
- As a result of this cooperation, 25 houses of worship have been rebuilt and 65 are undergoing construction.
- HUD is administering a \$10 million Federal Loan Guarantee Fund -- established by Congress as part of the 1996 Church Arson Prevention Act -- to assist with the rebuilding effort.

## PREVENTION

- Arson prevention efforts continue across the nation. The U.S. Department of Justice awarded \$3 million in grants to counties in 13 states to intensify their enforcement and surveillance efforts around vulnerable houses of worship, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded approximately \$1.5 million in arson prevention and training grants.
- FEMA established a Clearinghouse for arson prevention resources that has received over 15,000 telephone inquiries from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- FEMA has distributed more than 500,000 arson prevention packets, including the NCATF Church Threat Assessment Guide.
- FEMA efforts also include a four-city pilot project in Nashville, TN, Charlotte, NC, Macon, GA, and Utica, NY, to develop grass-roots arson prevention programs.

Led by James E. Johnson, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Enforcement and Isabelle Katz Pinzler, Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, who replaced Deval L. Patrick, former Assistant Attorney General, the NCATF formalized the coordination of investigations already underway. The NCATF brought together the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Justice Department prosecutors, United States Attorneys, victim/witness coordinators, the Community Relations Service (CRS) and the U.S. Marshals Service, in partnership with state and local officers and prosecutors.

The efforts of the NCATF have been aided significantly by support from Congress, which provided additional statutory authority and resources for these investigations.

## I. PROSECUTING DEFENDANTS

### A. Coordinating the Investigations

In 1996, following a series of fires around the time of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, federal authorities began to focus on the sharp increase in reports of attacks on churches, particularly African American churches in the South. These church fires led officials to take steps to improve the coordination within federal law enforcement and between federal, state and local law enforcement.

In June 1996, President Clinton established the National Church Arson Task Force to better coordinate the efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement. Shortly thereafter, Attorney General Janet Reno directed U.S. Attorneys to establish local task forces focusing on arsons at houses of worship or to join an existing local task force. These local task forces include state and local law enforcement and fire prevention officials, special agents of the ATF and FBI, mediators from the Community Relations Service, and victim/witness coordinators.

In addition to the local task forces, the NCATF established an operations team in Washington staffed by special agents of the ATF and the FBI, as well as seasoned prosecutors from the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorney's Offices around the country. Working with local task forces, the operations team continues to investigate incidents, identify potential connections and prosecute cases.

Since the formation of the Task Force, hundreds of ATF and FBI investigators have been deployed to work with more than 80 federal prosecutors and state and local authorities. It is one of the largest series of arson investigations in history and is currently the largest ongoing civil rights investigation.

### B. Conducting the Investigations

For years, many arsons at houses of worship were handled by local authorities, and not reported to any federal agency. As a result, local law enforcement often did not benefit from the resources of the federal government in pursuing these incidents. Following the formation of the Task Force, local law enforcement and fire authorities began regularly reporting these incidents to federal authorities. As a result, they now are receiving additional assistance in these investigations.

From its inception, the NCATF developed a protocol for investigating and prosecuting suspected arsons. The protocol sets forth procedures for facilitating the exchange of information among Task Force agencies, developing an investigative plan for each incident, and ensuring that investigators pursue all lines of inquiry, including whether the crime was motivated by race or religion, and whether any one incident is connected to

“It’s important to remember the struggle of this country. It serves as a reminder as to how we all pulled together as a country to fight racism and hatred...the FBI, ATF and local and state law enforcement [are] all working together to solve these crimes. That is significant.”

Reverend Terrance Mackey,  
Mt. Zion AME Church in  
North Charleston, SC.

any other. To gain a more complete picture of the arson problem, the Task Force determined it would investigate arsons going back to January 1995.

Once an investigation is opened, the NCATF compiles statistical information about the case in a unified database. In addition, the databases and computer systems of the ATF and FBI are used to track and analyze evidence and to generate investigative leads.

In pursuing these investigations, the FBI calls upon its experience in conducting civil rights investigations, and the ATF relies on its experience in conducting arson and explosives investigations. The NCATF also engaged in training among its constituent agencies. ATF experts trained FBI agents and Department of Justice prosecutors regarding arson investigations. Civil Rights Division prosecutors and FBI experts trained ATF agents regarding civil rights investigations and prosecutions.

"The law enforcement agencies and the assistance they provided was tremendous. I have worked on investigations with other agencies in the past, but I was surprised and most appreciative of the manpower that responded to the scenes."

Sgt. Buddy Oxford, Supervisor, Criminal Investigative Division, Greenville (TX) Police Department.

As the past year has proven, arson cases are among the most difficult criminal cases to solve. Forensic evidence is often destroyed in the fire, and there are often no eye witnesses to the incidents because some of the burned churches are located in isolated, rural areas. For these reasons, the arsons can often take years to solve. Moreover, as with many criminal acts, it is difficult to discern the motive for setting fire to a house of worship.

### **C. Strengthening Laws and Adding Resources**

Over the past year, Congress has provided tremendous support to the efforts of the Task Force, by strengthening federal laws and providing additional resources.

those who conspired to deprive persons of their civil rights or who desecrated religious property or a house of worship (18 U.S.C. 241 and 247).

On July 3, 1996, President Clinton signed the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996, which granted federal prosecutors greater power in pursuing burnings and desecrations at houses of worship. Sponsored by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), Senator Lauch Faircloth (R-NC), Congressman Henry J. Hyde (R-IL) and Congressman John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI), the statute was passed unanimously by both Houses of Congress.

*"It is so important to us that not just Congress, but all bodies of politics in this country, not only at the national level, but at the local level, move quickly to address this issue. You have done that with dispatch."*

Reverend Mac Charles Jones (1950-1997), Director of the Burned Churches Project of the National Council of Churches, testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, June 28, 1996.

The new law, which amended 18 U.S.C. 247, enables federal prosecutors to file charges in racially motivated arsons without having to demonstrate that the incident involved the use of interstate facilities and without showing that the resulting damage totaled \$10,000 or more. Also, prosecutors can now seek sentences of up to 20 years imprisonment for arson.

In addition, in August 1996, Congress provided more than \$12 million to support ATF's role in the Task Force, until the end of that fiscal year. The next month, Congress appropriated an additional \$12 million for ATF's role in the following fiscal year. Additional funds for Task Force activities by the Justice Department and the FBI also were appropriated or reprogrammed.

#### **D. Making Progress**

##### **1. Investigations**

The NCATF has opened investigations into 429 arsons, bombings or attempted bombings that have occurred at houses of worship between January 1, 1995, and May 27, 1997. This number does not include vandalism and other desecration at houses of worship, which continue to be investigated and prosecuted by the FBI, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorneys offices; nor does it include fires that the investigators have determined to be accidental.

Of these 429 incidents, 162 have involved African American churches -- more than three quarters of which are located in the southern United States. [See Appendix 1, Chart "A"; See Appendix 1, Charts "B"- "E" for a list of African American church fire investigations in the South.] While arsons at houses of worship appeared to reach a peak in June 1996, federal authorities continue to receive reports of such arsons. For instance, the NCATF launched 17 investigations in March 1997, 21 investigations in April 1997, and 12 investigations in May 1997. [See Appendix 1, Charts "F"- "G" identifying the numbers of investigations launched each month since the Task Force began.]

The NCATF continues to launch a new investigation for every new suspicious fire. As of May 27, 1997, there were 279 investigations in which arrests had not yet been made. The Task Force remains committed to expending the necessary time, resources and effort to solving these crimes and prosecuting those who are responsible.

**"Without the assistance of federal investigators, ..state and local officials would certainly have had a greater task at hand. The hard work and cooperation paid off...Over the last 12 months...we have developed an even stronger relationship... that I hope will continue.**

**G. Mike Davis, State Fire Marshal, Texas Commission on Fire Protection.**

To expand the sources of information available to investigators, the NCATF established a toll-free tip line for citizens to report information on arsons at houses of worship.

#### **1-888-ATF-FIRE**

To date, the NCATF has received more than 1500 calls through its tip line service. The ATF and FBI also are offering rewards for information in a number of arson cases. Private organizations, including Nationsbank and an insurance industry association, are also offering rewards.

#### **2. Arrests**

The partnership among various enforcement agencies has produced a significant number of state and federal arrests.

Since January 1995, federal, state and local authorities have arrested 199 suspects in connection with 150 of the 429 investigations that the Task Force has launched. This 35% rate of arrest is more than double the general arrest rate for arsons, which is approximately 16%, according to Justice Department statistics. [See Appendix 1, Chart "H"]

Of the 199 persons arrested, 160 are white, 34 are African American, and 5 are Hispanic. Eighty three people arrested were juveniles. Of the 81 suspects arrested for arsons at African American churches, 55 are white, 25 are African American and 1 is Hispanic. Of the 123 suspects arrested for arsons at non-African American houses of worship, 110 are white, 9 are African American, and 4 are Hispanic. Five of the white suspects were arrested for arsons at both African American and non-African American churches. [See Appendix 1, Charts "I"- "K."] More than three quarters of all arrests were made after the formation of the Task Force. [See Appendix 1, Charts "L"- "N" identifying the number of arrests made each month since 1995.]

#### **3. Convictions**

Since January 1, 1995, 110 defendants have been convicted in federal and state prosecutions in connection with fires at 77 houses of worship. [See Appendix 2, for a list of incidents in which a conviction has been obtained.] These successes include the first convictions under provisions of the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996. Of the 25 defendants who have been convicted of federal charges, 14 have been convicted of criminal civil rights charges.

"It is because of the multitude of law enforcement agencies working together across jurisdictional lines....and being able to work as a team that this was such a success....It makes our goals much more obtainable."

Sgt. Terry Sult, Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) Police Department.

Federal charges are also pending in a number of other cases, and grand jury investigations are ongoing as well. The Task Force has found that only a few of the fires are linked by common defendants. Conspiracy charges have been filed in a limited number of cases. These conspiracies, though, have tended to be confined to the small geographic areas where the arsons have occurred. Investigators continue to pursue the question of whether broader conspiracies were responsible for some of the fires, but to date the evidence has not established the existence of a national conspiracy.

In still other cases, state prosecutions have been initiated in consultation with federal prosecutors or investigators. The NCATF actively monitors these prosecutions to ensure that any federal interest is vindicated and to ensure that accurate information is compiled regarding law enforcement's response to attacks on houses of worship.

## II. HELPING TO REBUILD

### A. Coordinating the Rebuilding Effort

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has forged a coalition with the National Council of Churches, the Congress of National Black Churches, Habitat for Humanity, local financial institutions and other organizations to coordinate the rebuilding effort. Together they have assessed the overall arson damage and worked to target resources to affected houses of worship as quickly as possible.

Resources available through this rebuilding coalition include grants, low interest loans, materials and in-kind donations, pro-bono legal services, architectural design services, assistance with insurance, and volunteers.

"At first I came here with the knowledge that I was to rebuild churches...What I did not realize was that I was also here to help rebuild the hopes and trust of the suffering community."

Elisabeth Miller, a 17-year Great Falls, VA, resident who traveled to Boligee, AL, to help rebuild Little Zion Baptist Church.

People told us to be careful of some in the community. A local white farmer passed by, stopped, and slowly reversed. He signaled me to his truck and asked what we were doing. He reached into his pocket and gave me a \$100 bill to buy lunch for the volunteers. At that moment it was clear to me we were supposed to be there."

Jayna Powell, of Baltimore, who organized a group of volunteers who traveled to Chelford, AR, to rebuild St. Marks Missionary Baptist Church.

The resources came from a wide array of participants who responded to the arsons. Volunteer and religious organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, Christmas in April, Mennonite Disaster Services, United Methodist's Volunteers in Mission, and the Washington Quaker Workcamps, among others, organized construction volunteers; the American Institute of Architects provided volunteer architectural design services; the AFL-CIO and other unions organized union construction workers; the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law organized private law firms to provide pro-bono legal services; and the Enterprise Foundation worked with a coalition of foundations to contribute financial resources to the rebuilding effort.

As a result of this cooperation, 25 houses of worship have been rebuilt and 65 more are currently being constructed.

B.

We are glad to be back in our church. We were elated to have the volunteers come to the community. They were down to earth and dived right in. I have been a member of this church since I was 27 years old, and now I am 86. We seem to be closer now.

Selma Coles, congregant, Johnson Grove Baptist Church, Denmark, TN.

### **Strengthening Resources to Help Rebuild**

Working with President Clinton, Congress enacted legislation that authorized a HUD loan guarantee program that can be used for rebuilding houses of worship. The Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996 made HUD responsible for administering a \$10 million Federal Loan Guarantee Fund to assist with the rebuilding of houses of worship and buildings of other non-profit organizations that have been damaged or destroyed by arson.

Through its work with local financial institutions, HUD is working actively with approximately 20% of the houses of worship identified as candidates for loan assistance.

In addition, the rebuilding coalition is awarding "rebuilding resource packages" to 79 churches in 18 states in the form of grants from the National Council of Churches, federally guaranteed loans, volunteer labor and in-kind materials. Of these 79 churches, 13 are eligible for a HUD loan, 20

have received or are eligible for a National Council of Churches grant, and 46 are eligible for a resource package including a grant and loan.

### **C. Reaching out to the Communities**

"Nothing prepared us for what we were going to experience. The local community was so welcoming. The preacher even wondered whether the guy who lit the first match understood how many people he brought together. In a way, I think it may have done as much good as it did harm. It's ironic that we had to travel hundreds of miles to address race relations. But now we're trying to foster community awareness right here on our campus."

Rob Donahue, who traveled with fellow Northwestern University students from Chicago to help rebuild the Rising Star Baptist Church in Greensboro, AL.

enhance local and state programs to prevent fires at houses of worship and to promote arson awareness generally. The National Arson Prevention Initiative, announced by President Clinton in June 1996, has focused on coordinating public and private sector resources to support community-based grass roots efforts to prevent arsons. FEMA Director James Lee Witt met with and enlisted the support of national fire and law enforcement organizations, and religious and volunteer groups in arson prevention activities.

The private-public partnership is continuing to identify other areas where help can be provided. The partnership conducts on-site visits and group workshops, at which technical advice and guidance is offered. HUD has organized regional workshops to bring together ministers from the burned churches with organizations and financial institutions, volunteers, and other grant-making agencies.

## **III. PREVENTING ARSONS**

### **A. Coordinating Prevention Efforts**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is coordinating the federal government's efforts to

In June 1996, FEMA established a Clearinghouse for arson prevention resources. The toll-free number for the Clearinghouse is:

**1-888-603-3100**

To date, the Clearinghouse has received over 15,000 telephone inquiries from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and has provided more than 500,000 packets of arson prevention materials. Included in those materials is the Church Threat Assessment Guide, prepared by the NCATF, that informs congregations about steps they can take to make their houses of worship safer, as well as steps to take after an incident has occurred.

In addition, following a meeting with Vice President Al Gore in June 1996, the insurance industry announced its plan to participate in the arson prevention initiative. Insurance representatives pledged to help find insurance for houses of worship destroyed by arson. The industry also established a toll-free insurance hotline and offered free site surveys to reduce the risk of arson for any interested house of worship.

## **B. Strengthening Prevention Resources**

### **1. Grants**

In an effort to help communities prevent future arsons, the federal government provided additional resources. For instance, with Congress' authorization, the Justice Department awarded \$3 million in grants to counties from 13 states to intensify their enforcement and surveillance efforts around vulnerable houses of worship. The states were: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

In FY 1996, FEMA disbursed \$774,000 in arson training grants to enhance state and local arson investigations and prevention capabilities. These grants have been used to deliver National Fire Academy courses by the state fire training organizations and also to support the training of state and regional arson task forces. In FY 1997, FEMA has disbursed an additional \$635,000 to the states for arson awareness and prevention efforts.

### **2. Prevention Education**

The NCATF updated and distributed a Church Threat Assessment Guide containing valuable information on the steps that may be taken to try to prevent fires at houses of worship and the steps to follow after an incident has occurred. Using this guide, special agents of ATF and FBI continue to

"What started out as a negative came out extremely positive... Since the time [of the arson], law enforcement has been monitoring the churches in all rural areas and I think that is just tremendous... I believe the President has done a tremendous job... and [he] should continue doing the things he is doing."

Reverend Dennis D. Lawson, former pastor,  
Canaan A.M.E. Church, Columbia, TN.

conduct prevention outreach efforts in communities across the nation. Local and state fire and law enforcement leaders and members of the insurance industry have also successfully utilized the guide to conduct threat assessments of religious structures.

The NCATF is working closely with FEMA, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the National Sheriffs' Association and Southern governors to develop a series of interdisciplinary training conferences and workshops on arson prevention that will be conducted in 13 targeted Southern states in 1997. An additional 4 regional conferences outside the Southern region are also planned.

Recognizing that arson is a local problem that must be addressed at the grassroots level, FEMA has developed a pilot community action program for arson prevention in four communities: Nashville, TN, Charlotte, NC, Macon, GA, and Utica, NY. A coalition of fire prevention personnel, law enforcement personnel and community, school and business leaders has been recruited to develop local arson prevention programs. These include: workshops on juvenile firesetters, arson risk assessment surveys, arson hot-lines, improved building and fire code enforcement and neighborhood watch programs. These demonstration programs will become the basis for a national grassroots arson prevention effort.

#### **IV. RECONCILIATION**

##### **A. Reaching Out to the Affected Communities**

Without the confidence and cooperation of the congregations whose houses of worship burned, many of these investigations, which were difficult at the outset, would have been destined to fail. Faced with criticism of law enforcement from some congregations, the NCATF took steps early on to ensure solid, working relationships between law enforcement and the affected communities.

Less than a week after being formalized, the NCATF met with FBI and ATF Special Agents in Charge and U.S. Attorneys from the Southeast region to discuss the perceptions within the affected communities and to emphasize the critical importance of pursuing the investigations with vigilance, determination and dispatch, as well as with sensitivity to the needs of the victims. Following these meetings, the agents and prosecutors, together with representatives from the CRS, worked to improve lines of communications with the affected communities and make their commitment to these investigations clear.

The ATF, the FBI and the Sheriff's Department are continuing to investigate [the arson at our church]... They have been very cooperative...keeping us up to date.

Walter H. Thomas, Pastor  
Johnson Grove Baptist Church  
Denmark, TN.

President Clinton, Vice President Gore, Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin and Attorney General Reno have helped reach out to the affected communities, by bringing the church arsons to the nation's attention, speaking out forcefully on the commitment of the federal government to solve these arsons and meeting with ministers from the burned churches.

In June 1996, President Clinton traveled to the site of a burned African American church in Greeleyville, SC, to help dedicate a new church. Later that month, he organized an interfaith breakfast where he called on leaders of all faiths to open discussions to resolve our nation's racial and religious divisions. In August, the President and Vice President and their families traveled to Fruitland, TN, to help rebuild a church that had been destroyed earlier.

The President also convened a meeting of governors from affected states, who have worked hard to marshal resources in their states to help investigate arsons, prevent future arsons, and rebuild burned houses of worship. He also acknowledged the work of many groups which responded to these incidents, including the National Council of Churches, the Anti-Defamation League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the NAACP.

In addition to meeting with representatives from these groups and the Congressional Black Caucus, Assistant Secretary Johnson, then-Assistant Attorney General Patrick, and current Acting Assistant Attorney General Pinzler, have visited churches in the South to reinforce the Task Force's commitment to these investigations and view the devastation these arsons have wrought.

## B. Dispatching Conflict Resolution Experts

The Community Relations Service (CRS) also has been an important partner in Task Force outreach efforts. Conflict resolution experts from CRS have worked in many communities across the country to identify and resolve racial conflicts and reduce racial tensions, to foster healthy relationships between law enforcement and minority communities and to facilitate communications among all parties.

"I think that many black and white people...in Florence who did not previously know each other or would probably not even talk to each other became friends when they worked together to rebuild the church. It sort of brought the people together."

Michael Gutierrez, a 19-year old Montgomery College (MD) student, who traveled with county assistance to help rebuild Effingham Baptist Church in Florence, SC.

"With the help of CRS, we were able to bring everyone together to reassure the local community that we recognized the problem and were prepared to deal with it. It gave us the opportunity to establish and improve our lines of communication. We got together before we ever had a problem, and fortunately we haven't had one yet."

Chief Joe Garcia, Brookshire  
(TX) Police Department.

Private companies offered funds and materials to help rebuild the burned churches. Transportation companies offered reduced fares for volunteers who traveled south to lend a hand.

And thousands of Americans donated time and money to support these efforts. Habitat for Humanity estimates that more than 15,000 individuals volunteered to help in the rebuilding process.

The NCATF also developed, with the help of CRS, a "Best Practices" guide for conducting community outreach activities.

CRS plays an integral part in the Administration's response in local towns and cities, working with over 150 local communities in reducing racial polarization, bridging communication between law enforcement and minority communities, facilitating a biracial rebuilding effort, and training law enforcement on cultural diversity and race relations. Throughout the South, CRS convened a series of dialogues on race relations in an effort to reduce the likelihood of further church burnings.

### C. Watching the Nation Respond

In addition to the efforts of Congress, federal agencies and the states, many private companies and organizations, as well as an untold number of Americans, pitched in to respond to the arsons.

"We saw people working side by side of all cultures...from their teens to their 70's. It was the American Dream -- having people work together."

Jim Mechem & JeanAnne Swope, a Santa Fe, NM, couple, who spent a month in Lauderdale, MS, helping to rebuild the St. Paul Primitive Baptist Church.

"It's one thing to be conscious of the problem, it's another to get up and do something about it. I witnessed an incredible outpouring of support to the community."

Rabbi Nancy Wiener, a New York resident who traveled to Boligee, AL, to help rebuild the Little Zion Baptist Church.

Seventy-three VISTA and AmeriCorps volunteers traveled to 18 rural communities in which church arsons have occurred and to over 70 other communities in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. In these communities, volunteers conducted community and church threat assessments, organized arson watch groups and town hall meetings on arson prevention, and engaged in community relations projects.

"The local community....saw this as a way to come out of this ordeal stronger. This was a challenge. And they were going to rise and meet the challenge. I hope whoever did this saw me hanging drywall and putting the roof on -- so they saw their act of hate backfired...it brought people together."

Earl Daniels, a Valdosta, GA, resident who traveled to Boligee, AL, to help rebuild the Little Zion Baptist Church.

In the end, Americans of all walks of life refused to let these acts of destruction tear apart our communities

or our nation.

"I came down for a week and ended up staying five months. You meet so many people from so many different backgrounds and they are the most unselfish people. No one really cares whether they're arsons or not. It's just a matter of doing what needs to be done. It's an amazing experience."

Jason Horning, a 21 year-old Ann Arbor, MI, resident who traveled to Greensboro, AL, to help rebuild the Rising Star Baptist Church.

## V. DRAWING PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Although the investigations of most of the fires continue, the charges filed and the convictions obtained to date enable the Task Force to offer some preliminary conclusions. These conclusions are not based on cases that have not been completed or where evidence is not sufficient to support additional charges. As a result, the Task Force cannot answer all of the questions raised by the fires.

- **Damage**

Hundreds of houses of worship burned, congregations were

temporarily displaced, and many people were left wondering how this could happen in the 1990's. These arsons destroyed rural wooden churches, ruined 100-year old Bibles, and caused tens of millions of dollars in damage. But those communities which suffered a burned house of worship came to realize that thousands of Americans really care. The arsonists may have sought to divide our communities by burning our houses of worship, but in the end they only helped bring them closer together.

- **Multiple Motives**

The arsons at African American churches raised significant fears about an increase in racially motivated crimes. As a result of our efforts to date, we have determined that the arsons -- at both African American and other houses of worship -- were motivated by a wide array of factors, including not only blatant racism or religious hatred, but also financial profit, burglary, and personal revenge. The Task Force continues to investigate many cases. When sufficient evidence of racial motive is developed, we will continue to seek and obtain criminal civil rights convictions, as we have against 14 of the 25 defendants convicted of federal charges in Alabama, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

- **National Conspiracy**

While the Task Force continues to explore the question whether there are connections between the fires across the nation, the cases closed to date and the charges that have been filed do not support the theory that these fires were the product of a nationwide conspiracy. For instance, the Task Force has found that only a few of the fires are linked by common defendants. Conspiracy charges have been filed in a limited number of cases. These conspiracies, though, have tended to be confined to the small geographic areas where the arsons have occurred.

- **Hate Group Involvement**

While there have been a handful of cases in which members and former members of hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, have been convicted for arsons at houses of worship, most of the defendants were not found to be members of hate groups. Prosecutors need not show, however, that a defendant belongs to a particular hate group in order to gain a conviction.

- **Investigations Continue**

The Task Force continues to investigate and prosecute those responsible for burning our nation's houses of worship. It is, therefore, too soon for the task force to speak conclusively about the motivation behind many of the fires at churches and other houses of worship. While it was the number of fires at African American churches that brought these crimes to national attention, the NCATF will continue to investigate and prosecute attacks on all houses of worship, regardless of their denomination or racial composition.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have seen how law enforcement working together can produce tremendous successes. We have seen how government agencies and private groups can work together to help rebuild a house of worship. And we have seen how all Americans from all walks of life can come together as one. We are committed to building on the progress that we have seen to date and to eliminating the divisions in our society. The federal effort continues to prosecute the arsonists, rebuild the burned houses of worship, and prevent more fires. There is more work to be done. We are committed to seeing the task completed.

**Acknowledgment**

The co-chairs of the Task Force would like to thank all of the investigators, prosecutors, state and local officials and others who have worked tirelessly and so well over the course of the last year as these investigations have proceeded. We would also like to thank our partners in these efforts at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Community Relations Service.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**James E. Johnson Isabelle Katz Pinzler**  
**Assistant Secretary for Acting Assistant Attorney General**  
**Enforcement Civil Rights Division**  
**Department of the Treasury Department of Justice**

**June 1997**

---

**APPENDIX I**

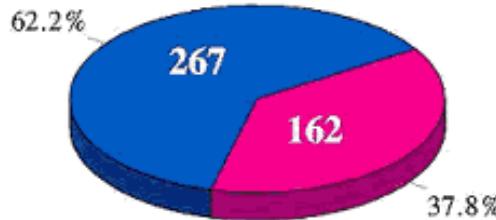
---

# National Church Arson Task Force

Breakdown of House of Worship Arson/Bombing Investigations  
JANUARY 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997

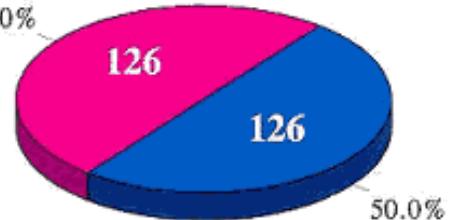
Houses of Worship  
Nationwide

Other Houses  
of Worship



Houses of Worship  
Located in the South

African American  
Houses of Worship



*Total House of Worship Arsons/Bombings - 429*

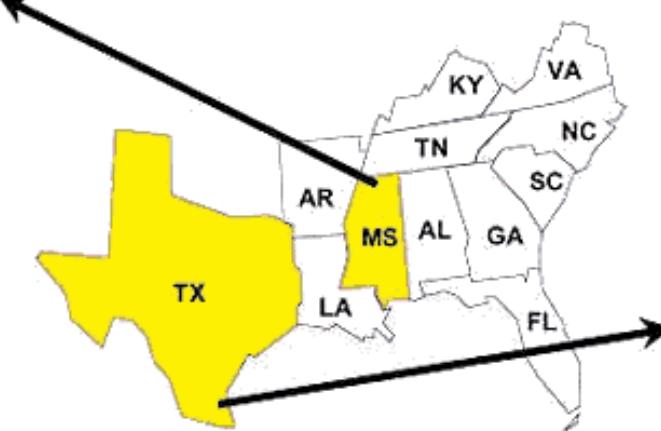
CHART A

# NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

## AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH FIRE INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SOUTH

### January 1, 1995 to May 27, 1997

NOVEMBER 1, 1995
★ Lynch Chapel United Methodist - Clinton, MS
MARCH 5, 1996
St. Paul CME - Hattie, MS
MARCH 19, 1996
New Mt. Zion Baptist - Ruleville, MS
MARCH 30, 1996
★ El Bethel Church - Searchia, MS
JUNE 17, 1996
Kosciusko, MS
Mt. Pleasant Church
Central Grove Mission
JUNE 30, 1996
House of Prayer - Greenville, MS
AUGUST 4, 1996
Beacon Baptist - Yazoo City, MS
SEPTEMBER 6, 1996
First James Creek Missionary - Noxubee Co., MS
SEPTEMBER 8, 1996
★ First Missionary Baptist - Gulfport, MS
OCTOBER 9, 1996
House of Prayer, Church of God - Greenville, MS
OCTOBER 29, 1996
M. Olive Church of God - Tipterville, MS
DECEMBER 11, 1996
★ Malalieu Methodist Church - Meridian, MS
APRIL 9, 1997
Lakeview Missionary Baptist - Sledge, MS



JANUARY 29, 1995
Miles Chapel Christian Methodist - Houston, TX
FEBRUARY 19, 1995
Love Fellowship Church of God - Houston, TX
JUNE 5, 1995
★ Victory Baptist - Derison, TX
NOVEMBER 14, 1995
Greater Gospel Temple - Dallas, TX
FEBRUARY 12, 1996
Real Rock Church - Houston, TX
FEBRUARY 16, 1996
★ Real Rock Church - Houston, TX
APRIL 12, 1996
Southwest Community Baptist - Houston, TX
MAY 14, 1996
★ Long Ridge CME - Waskom, TX
JUNE 9, 1996
★ New Lighthouse of Prayer - Greenville, TX
JUNE 10, 1996
★ Church of the Living God - Greenville, TX
JUNE 16, 1996
Oin Track Baptist - Houston, TX
SEPTEMBER 10, 1996
Church of Living God - Dallas, TX
SEPTEMBER 26, 1996
Soul Inspiration - Dallas, TX
OCTOBER 17, 1996
Dance Street Ch. of Christ - Dallas, TX
OCTOBER 21, 1996
God's Gospel Temple - Dallas, TX
OCTOBER 23, 1996
Sardis Primitive Baptist - Mexia, TX
NOVEMBER 20, 1996
Full Gospel Powerhouse - Wichita Falls, TX
DECEMBER 7, 1996
Hopewell UMC - Centerville, TX
JANUARY 4, 1997
Harp Baptist Church - Fairfield, TX
MARCH 18, 1997
Garden Geth. C.O.G. - Houston, TX
March 22, 1997
★ McDonald Baptist - Fanns, TX
April 8, 1997
★ West Oakland Bapt - Beaumont, TX

\* Arrest Made

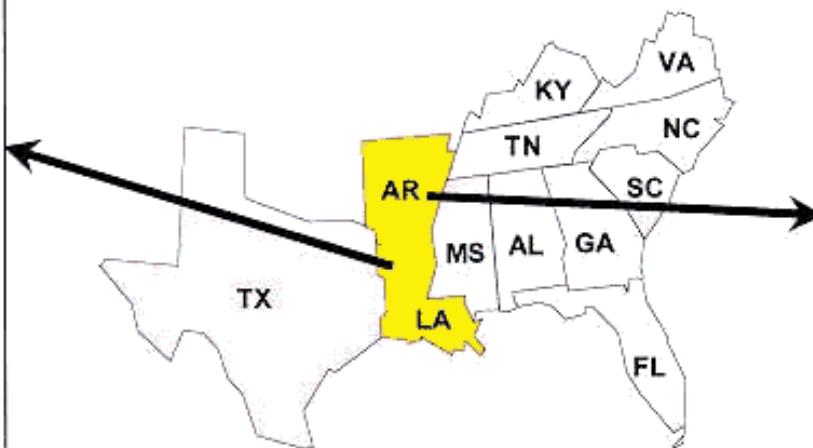
CHART B

# NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

## AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH FIRE INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SOUTH

### January 1, 1995 to May 27, 1997

MAY 24, 1995  
 Mt. Corinth Baptist, Vivian, LA  
 FEBRUARY 1, 1996  
 Zachary, LA  
 Cypress Grove Baptist  
 Baker, LA  
 Sweet Home Baptist  
 Thomas Chapel Benevolent Society  
 St. Paul's Free Baptist  
 APRIL 8, 1996  
 Oak Ridge Baptist - Calvn, LA  
 APRIL 11, 1996  
 St. Charles Baptist - Paincourtville, LA  
 JUNE 24, 1996  
 New Birth Temple - Shreveport, LA  
 JUNE 28, 1996  
 Greater Ebenezer - New Orleans, LA  
 AUGUST 2, 1996  
 St. Abraham Baptist - Shreveport, LA  
 SEPTEMBER 29, 1996  
 St. John's Baptist - Haughton, LA  
 DECEMBER 1, 1996  
 Samuel Temple - New Orleans, LA  
 DECEMBER 10, 1996  
 New Birth Miss. Bap - Lk. Charles, LA  
 FEBRUARY 2, 1997  
 Vision Baptist - Baton Rouge, LA



JULY 20, 1996  
 Clayborn Chapel AME - Arkadelphia, AR  
 JULY 27, 1996  
 New Calvary Church - Camden, AR  
 AUGUST 20, 1996  
 Mt. Zion Missionary - Marvell, AR  
 AUGUST 21, 1996  
 St. Matthews Missionary - Turner, AR  
 SEPTEMBER 26, 1996  
 Frederica Missionary Baptist - Helena, AR  
 NOVEMBER 17, 1996  
 Princess Chapel Missionary - Luxora, AR  
 APRIL 2, 1997  
 El Bethel COG In Christ - Beardon, AR

\* Arrest Made

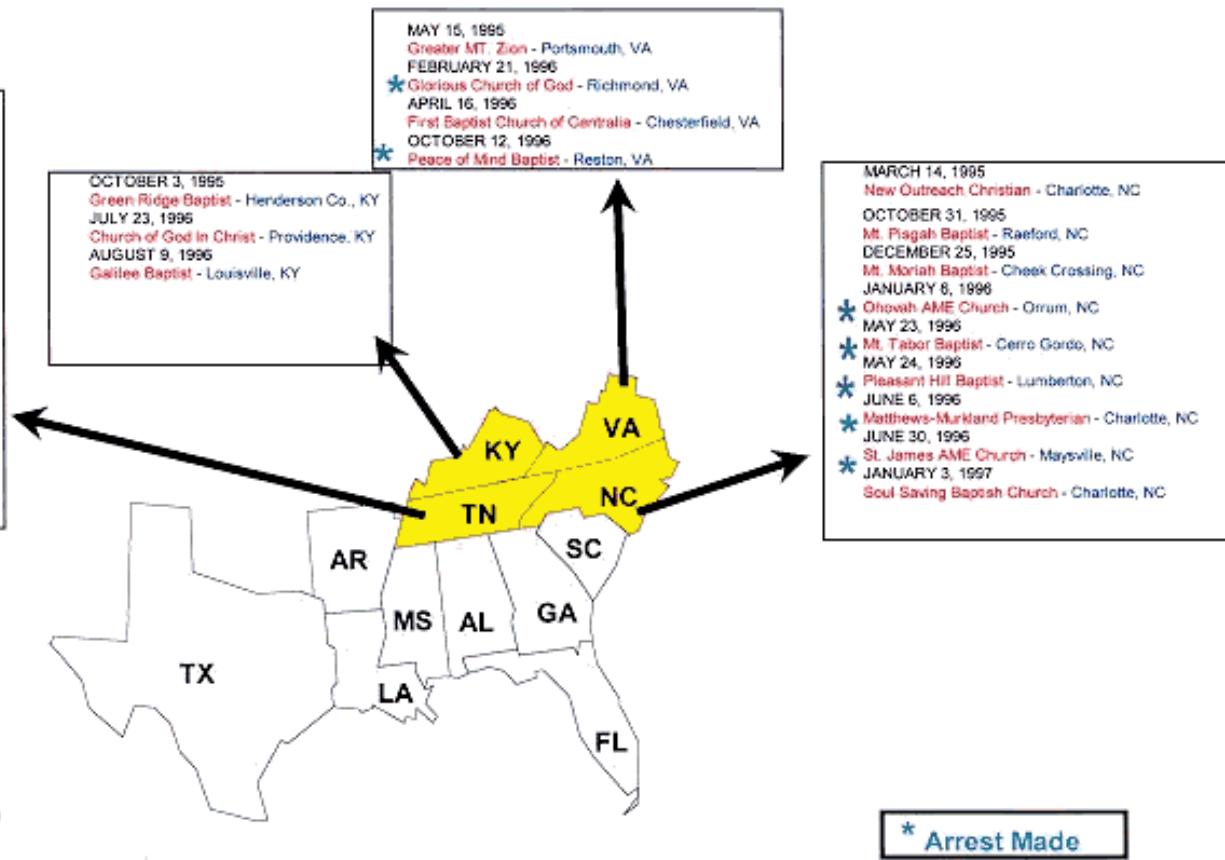
CHART C

# NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

## AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH FIRE INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SOUTH

### January 1, 1995 to May 27, 1997

JANUARY 13, 1995  
Johnson Grove Baptist - Bells, TN  
Macedonia Baptist - Denmark, TN  
JANUARY 29, 1995 Bombing  
\*Friendship Missionary - Maury Co., TN  
Canean AME Church - Maury Co., TN  
JANUARY 31, 1995  
Mt. Calvary Baptist - Hardeman, TN  
DECEMBER 30, 1995  
Salem Baptist - Fruitland, TN  
JANUARY 8, 1996  
Innerty Church - Knoxville, TN  
MAY 14, 1996  
Mt. Pleasant Baptist - Tigrett, TN  
AUGUST 5, 1996 Bombing Attempt  
\*Knowville Comm. Invest. (Innerty)  
- Knoxville, TN  
OCTOBER 29, 1996  
Springhill Missionary - Memphis, TN  
NOVEMBER 12, 1996  
Greenwood CME - Memphis, TN  
MARCH 23, 1997  
Pleasant Ridge Methodist - Pulaski, TN

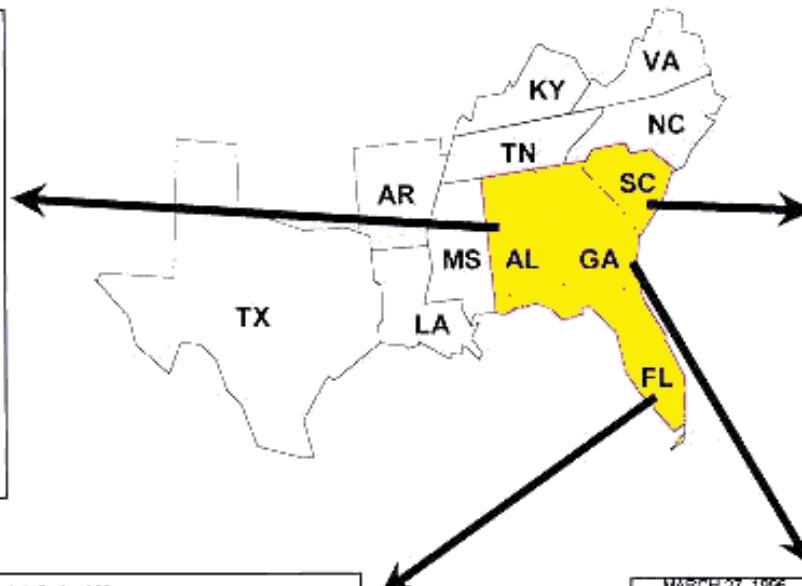


# NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

## AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH FIRE INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SOUTH

### January 1, 1995 to May 27, 1997

OCTOBER 31, 1995  
 \* Faith Whole Truth Holiness - Pennington, AL  
 DECEMBER 22, 1995  
 Mt. Zion Baptist - Boligee, AL  
 JANUARY 11, 1996  
 Little Mt. Zion Baptist - Boligee, AL  
 JANUARY 12, 1996  
 Mt. Zion Baptist - Boligee, AL  
 FEBRUARY 28, 1996  
 \* New Liberty Baptist - Tyler, AL  
 MARCH 25, 1996  
 Central Baptist - Browns, AL  
 MAY 5, 1996  
 \* Aetbank Freewill - Nauvoo, AL  
 JUNE 3, 1996  
 Raising Star Baptist - Greensboro, AL  
 JULY 22, 1996  
 \* Isabella Baptist - Tyler, AL  
 JULY 28, 1996  
 Emanuel Outreach - Decatur, AL  
 OCTOBER 27, 1996  
 Sunlight Baptist - Eastaboga, AL  
 NOVEMBER 14, 1996  
 \* Born Again Ch of Christ - Heflin, AL



MAY 20, 1995  
 Summergrove Baptist - Aiken, SC  
 JUNE 20, 1995  
 \* Mount Zion AME Church - Williamsburg Co., SC  
 JUNE 21, 1995  
 \* Macedonia Baptist - Manning, SC  
 AUGUST 15, 1995  
 \* Saint John's Baptist - Lexington Co., SC  
 DECEMBER 1995  
 \* Mount Hill Missionary - Montmorenci, SC  
 JANUARY 25, 1996  
 St. Paul AME Zion - Hartsville, SC  
 MARCH 31, 1996  
 \* Butler Chapel AME - Orangeburg, SC  
 APRIL 13, 1996  
 Rosemary Baptist - Barnwell, SC  
 APRIL 20, 1996  
 Effingham Baptist - Effingham, SC  
 JUNE 11, 1996  
 \* New St. Paul Apostolic - Florence, SC  
 JULY 16, 1996  
 \* Johns Island Church - Johns Island, SC  
 AUGUST 1, 1996  
 \* Springhill AME - Fordsdale Community, SC  
 DECEMBER 22, 1996  
 Arm Oak Baptist - Jasper, SC

JUNE 12, 1996  
 \* Evangelist Temple - Mananna, FL  
 AUGUST 7, 1996  
 \* Bethel Baptist - Jacksonville, FL  
 SEPTEMBER 8, 1996  
 New Life Tabernacle - Deland, FL  
 SEPTEMBER 15, 1996  
 Apostle Faith Church of Jesus - Indianatown, FL  
 OCTOBER 27, 1996  
 Shiloh Metropolitan - Jacksonville, FL  
 JANUARY 12, 1997  
 Plantation Center Minist. - Miami, FL  
 March 19, 1997  
 \* Covenant Missionary Bapt - Ocala, FL

MARCH 27, 1996  
 Gay's Hill Baptist - Millen., GA  
 AUGUST 7, 1996  
 Swift Creek Missionary - Macon, GA  
 OCTOBER 22, 1996  
 Holy Land of Inspiration - Brunswick, GA  
 NOVEMBER 30, 1996  
 Greater Zion Hill Missionary Baptist - Macon, GA  
 FEBRUARY 19, 1997  
 Antioch Holiness Church - Savannah, GA  
 FEBRUARY 22, 1997  
 \* Oak Grove CME Church - Elko, GA  
 APRIL 1, 1997  
 New Covenant Missionary - Atlanta, GA  
 MAY 1, 1997  
 \* Graham Temple Holiness - Nashville, GA  
 MAY 7, 1997  
 Calilee Missionary Bapt. - Marietta, GA  
 MAY 18, 1997  
 Mt. Zion Baptist - Taylorsville, GA

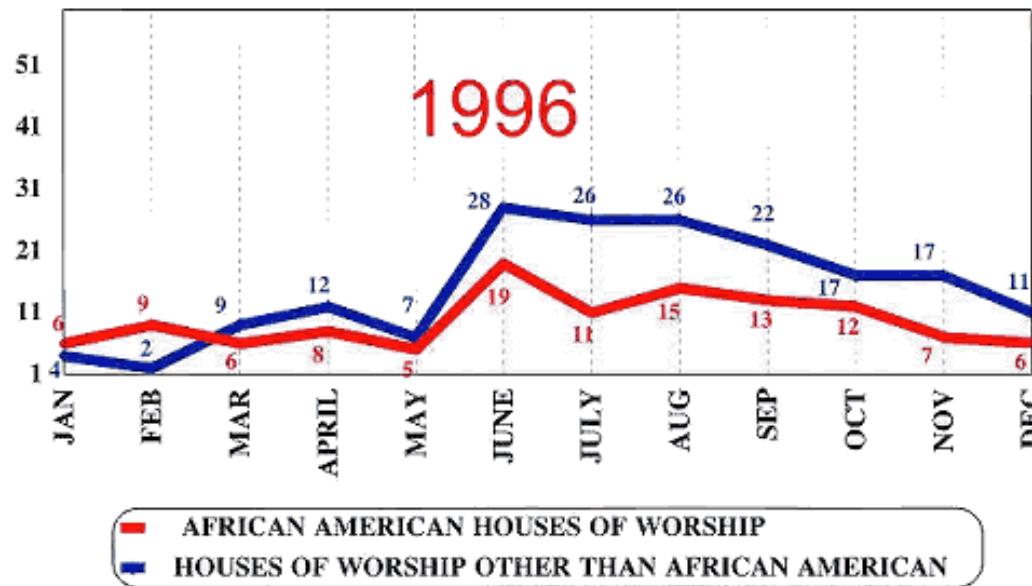
\* Arrest Made

CHART E

NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE  
CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS

117 - AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSES OF WORSHIP      181- OTHER HOUSES OF WORSHIP

**TOTAL INCIDENTS NATIONWIDE - 298**



JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

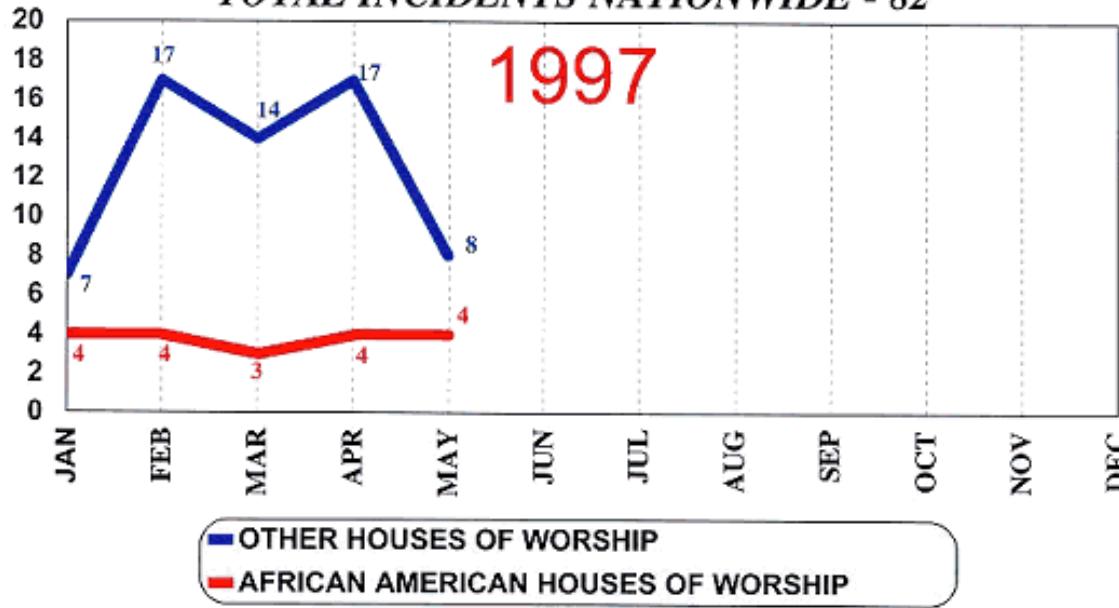
CHART F

NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE  
CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS

19- AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSES OF WORSHIP

63 - OTHER HOUSES OF WORSHIP

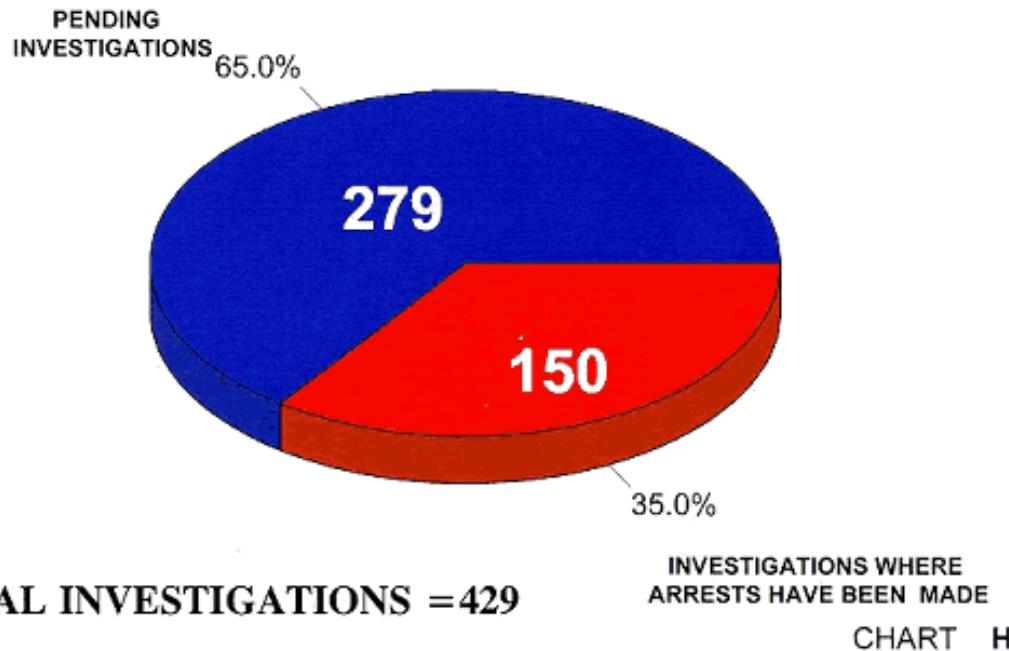
**TOTAL INCIDENTS NATIONWIDE - 82**



JANUARY 1, 1997 - MAY 27, 1997

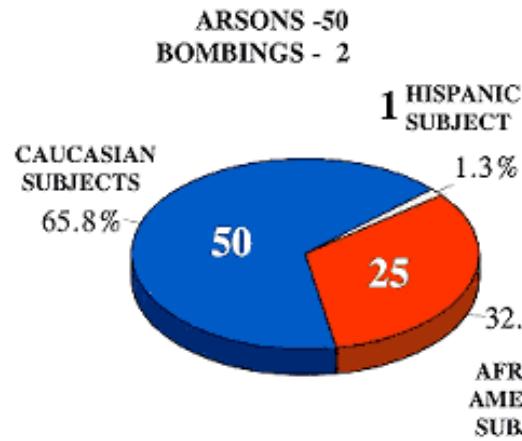
CHART G

**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE  
BREAKDOWN OF  
ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING  
INVESTIGATIONS  
JANUARY 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997**

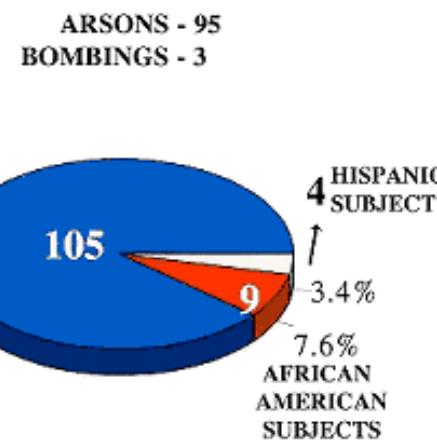


**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE**  
**RACIAL MAKEUP OF ARRESTED SUBJECTS**  
**HOUSE OF WORSHIP ARSONS/BOMBINGS NATIONWIDE**  
**JANUARY 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997**

AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HOUSES OF WORSHIP



NON-AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HOUSES OF WORSHIP

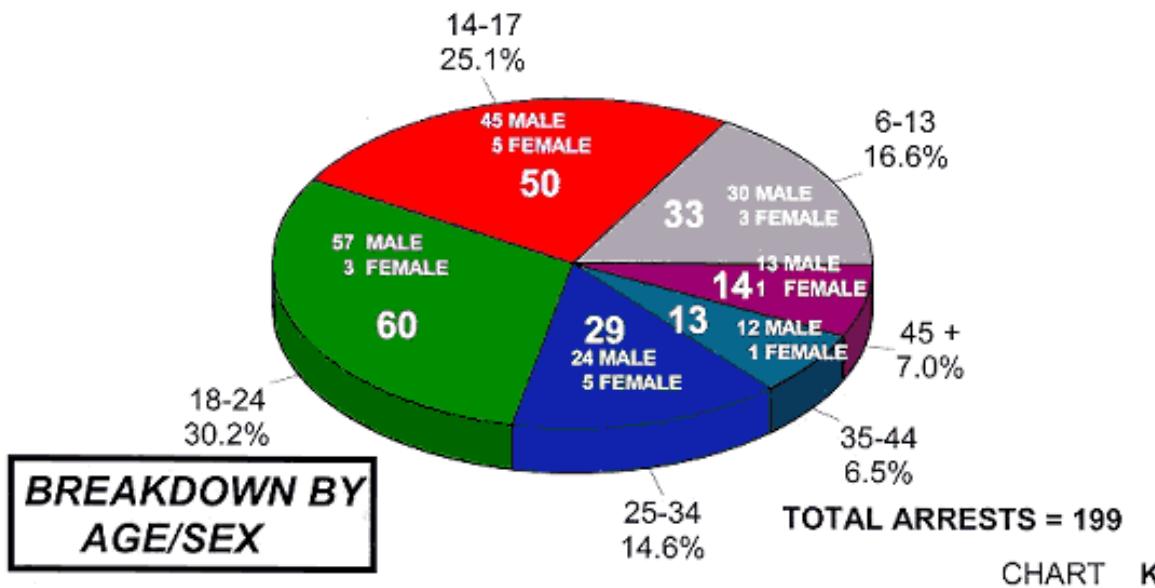


FIVE (5) ADDITIONAL CAUCASIAN SUBJECTS ARRESTED FOR ARSON/BOMBING OF AN AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSE OF WORSHIP AND A NON AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSE OF WORSHIP.

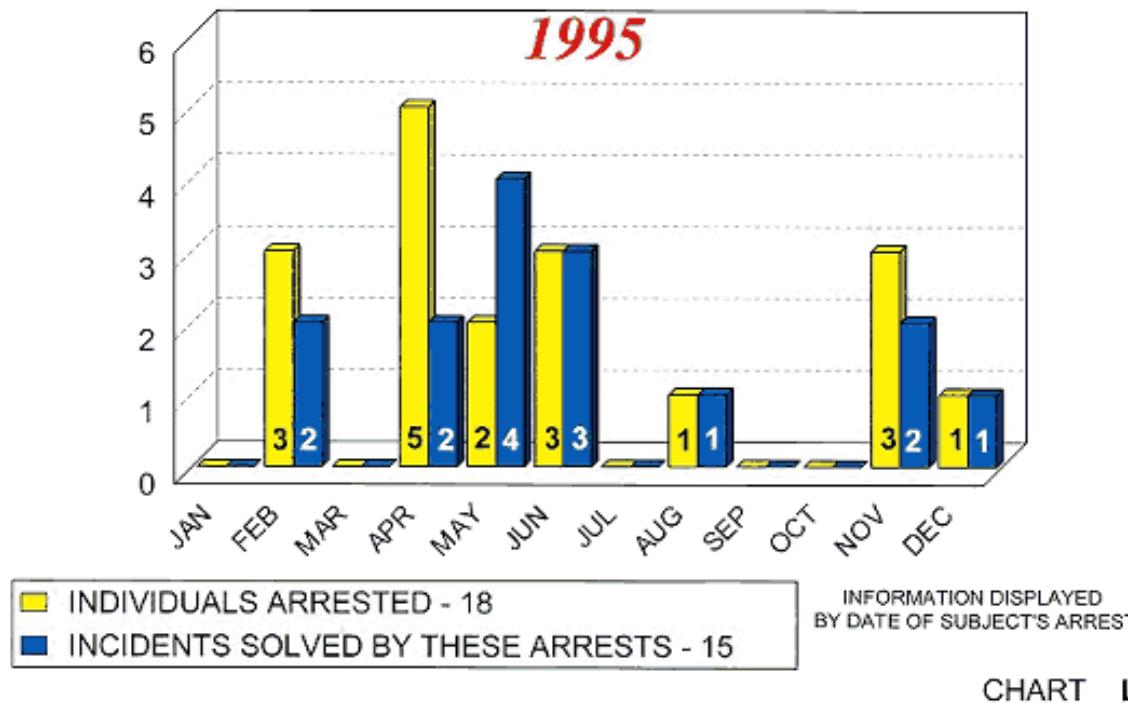
**199 SUBJECTS TOTAL**

CHART J

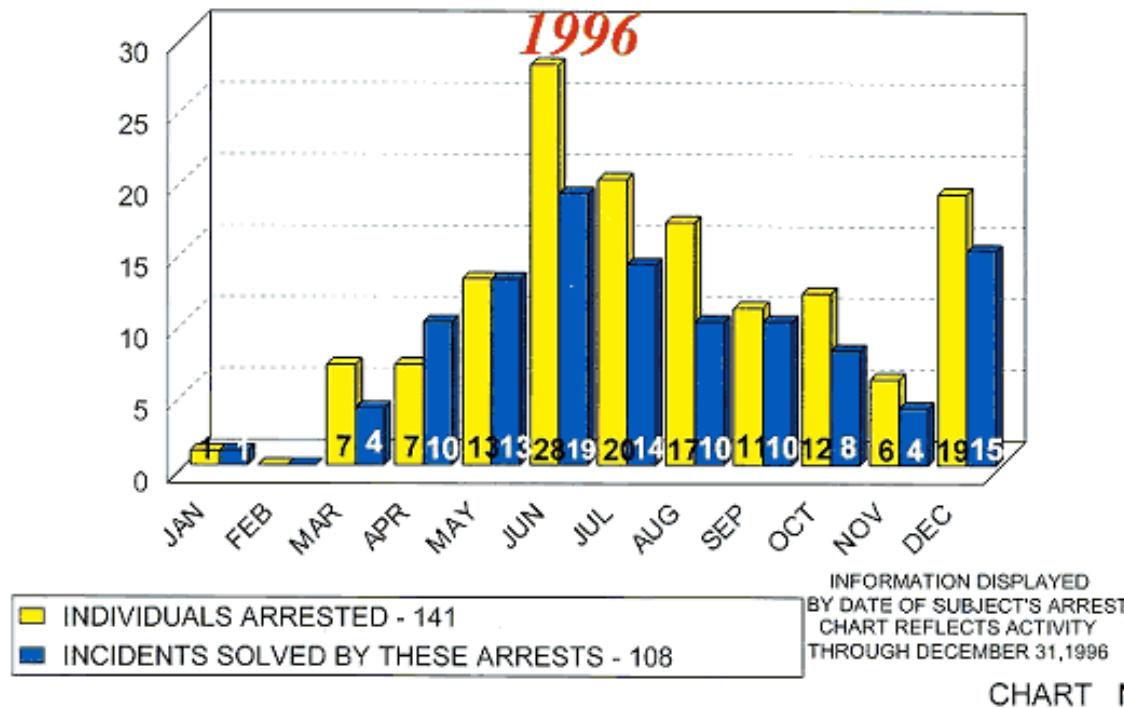
**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE  
SUBJECTS ARRESTED FOR CHURCH  
ARSONS/BOMBINGS/ATTEMPTED BOMBINGS  
IN THE UNITED STATES  
JANUARY 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997**



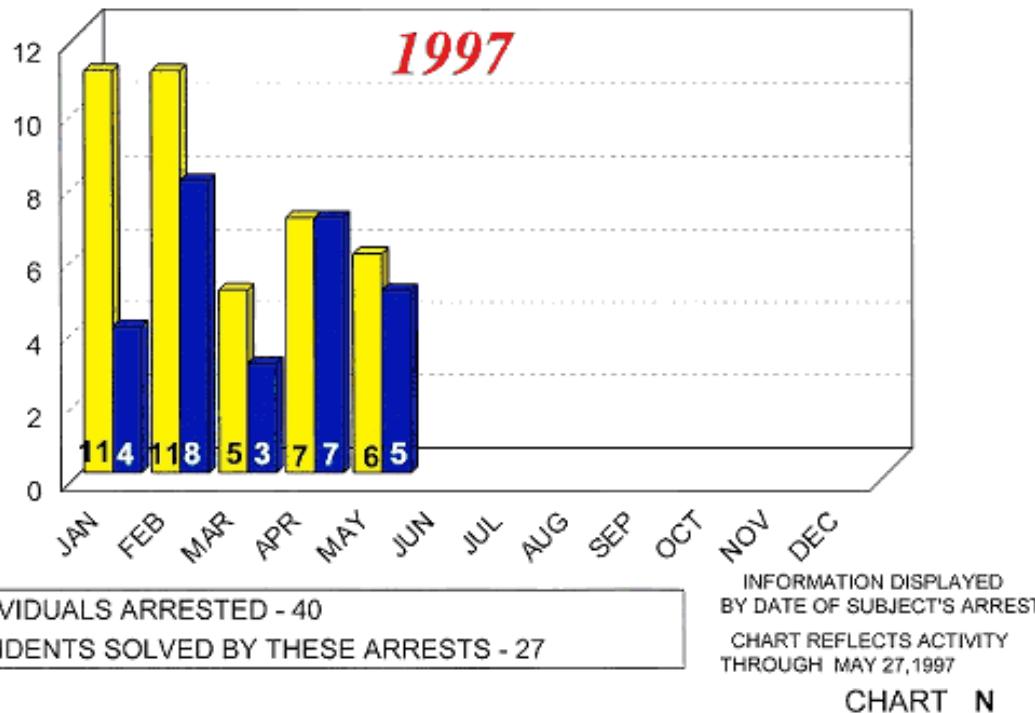
**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE**  
**CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS**  
**RESULTING IN ARRESTS NATIONWIDE**



**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE**  
**CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS**  
**RESULTING IN ARRESTS NATIONWIDE**



**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE**  
**CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS**  
**RESULTING IN ARRESTS NATIONWIDE**



---

APPENDIX II

---



P. O. Box 65798

Washington, D.C. 20530  
**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE**

**CONVICTIONS FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST HOUSES OF WORSHIP  
REPORTED SINCE JANUARY 1995  
(As of May 30, 1997)**

**Arsons and Bombings**

**ALABAMA**

1. **Faith Whole Truth Holiness (Pennington) (Southern District)** - On October 31, 1995, this African-American church was burned and vandalized. The fire was started when a flag was set against the interior wall and set on fire. A 20-year-old Caucasian male, and a 15-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty to state charges. The defendant was given a three year suspended sentence and the juvenile was sentenced to a juvenile boot camp. The defendant has since violated his probation and is imprisoned.
2. **New Liberty Baptist Church (Tyler) (Southern District)** - On February 28, 1996, this African-American church was burned. A 20-year-old Caucasian male, volunteer firefighter pled guilty and was sentenced under the state Youthful Offender Act and received probation at the request of the victims.
3. **Ashbank Freewill Baptist Church (Nauvoo)(Northern District)**- On May 6, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The defendant, a 58-year-old Caucasian male, started the fire with paper. The defendant was angry that he was not allowed to preach at the church. He was sentenced in state court to 30 years of imprisonment and ordered to pay restitution.
4. **First United Methodist (Hartselle)(Northern District)** - On May 9, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. Two Caucasian juveniles, 12 and 14, were playing in the basement of the church and ignited a piece of paper on a "dare". They were convicted and sentenced on state charges.
5. **Born Again Church of Christ (Heflin) (Northern District)** - On November 14, 1996, a cross was burned at this African-American church. Gasoline was poured onto two wooden beams arranged in the shape of a cross and then ignited at the front doorway of the church. Three Caucasian defendants, 26, 22, and 18, pled guilty in federal court to violating 18 U.S.C. •241(civil rights conspiracy). Sentencing is pending for all three defendants.

**ARIZONA**

## **6. Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel (Yuma)**

**7. Union Baptist Church (Yuma)** - On September 30, 1996 and October 1, 1996, these two churches were burned. Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel has a Hispanic congregation and Union Baptist Church has an African-American congregation. Our Lady Of Guadalupe Chapel was completely destroyed. An accelerant, candle oil, was used to start the fire. The defendant, a 25-year-old Caucasian male, confessed to both fires. He stated the fires were set to cover up evidence of burglaries. The damage to Union Baptist Church was estimated to be \$60,000. He pled guilty to state arson charges and was sentenced to 8 years on two counts of arson to run concurrently and 9.2 years for trafficking in stolen property.

## **CALIFORNIA**

**8. Trinity Presbyterian Church - (Spring Valley) (Southern District)** - On March 18, 1996, this interracial church was burned. The fire was started using gasoline and matches. Damage to this church was estimated at \$1.3 million. The defendant, a 28-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to state charges and was sentenced to nine years and four months of imprisonment. The court recommended that he be housed at a state mental facility.

## **DELAWARE**

**9. Saint Andrews Presbyterian (Newark)** - On March 25, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The arson was an attempt by four Caucasian juveniles to cover up a burglary. The juveniles, who ranged in age from 12 to 14, broke in and stole cake and soda. They were convicted of state charges, and received probation and restitution.

## **FLORIDA**

**10. First Born Church of the Living God (Tallahassee) (Northern District)** - On May 6, 1997, this African-American church was burglarized and burned. The defendant, a 20-year-old African-American male, poured paint thinner on the floor of church and ignited it. He pled guilty to state charges and was sentenced to 48 months of imprisonment and 24 months of probation.

**11. Jacksonville Jewish Center (Jacksonville) (Middle District)** - On February 22, 1997, a pipe bomb was discovered at the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Several children discovered the device near the speech podium area. The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office was called and later detonated the device safely. The defendant, a 32-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to one count of 18 U.S.C. • 844(h). Sentencing is scheduled for June 23, 1997.

**12. Trinity United Methodist ( Saint Petersburg) (Middle District )**- On October 24, 1996, this interracial church was burned. The defendant, an 18-year-old African-American male, threw a molotov cocktail at the exterior of the Trinity United Methodist Church. Damage was estimated at

\$1,000. The fire occurred during the civil disturbances over the police shooting of an African-American man. He pled guilty to a state arson charge. He was ordered to pay \$500 restitution.

## **ILLINOIS**

13. **First Presbyterian Church (Libertyville) (Northern District)**- On October 1, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned and swastikas were spray painted on the church. The damage was estimated at \$3,000. Four Caucasian juveniles, who ranged in age from 14 to 16, pled guilty in state court to criminal damage to property and arson. The juveniles were sentenced and placed on Juvenile Intensive Probation ranging from two to five years and ordered to serve between five and 30 days in secure detention. Other conditions of the juveniles' probation included drug treatment, restitution and an order not to have any contact with each other. One juvenile was also ordered to write a 1,000 word essay to the court on anti-Semitism.

## **IOWA**

14. **Saint Boniface (Westphalia) (Southern District)** - On July 7, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. Minimal damage was done in the interior of the church, including damage to the carpeting and an area spoiled by defecation. A vehicle outside the church also received minor burn damage and a purse was stolen from the vehicle. Two Caucasian juveniles, 10 and 12, confessed to local authorities. They were convicted in state court and each was sentenced to a year of probation.

15. **Hickory Grove Community Church (Ottumwa) (Southern District)** - On September 2, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. Damage is estimated to between \$150,000 and \$200,000. The defendant, a 46-year-old Caucasian male, was convicted on state charges and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment.

## **KENTUCKY**

16. **Methodist Church of Christ (Nicholasville) (Eastern District)** - On June 28, 1996, three Caucasian juveniles, one aged 16 and the others 17, burglarized this Caucasian church and then attempted to set the church on fire. The fire started with paper, but it self extinguished. The damage was confined to a few pews and a small area of the carpet. One of the juveniles also made a satanic drawing on the wall. All of the juveniles were convicted and sentenced in state court.

17. **Mount Zion Baptist Church (Somerset) (Eastern District)** - On March 9, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The fire started when weatherboard in the rear of the church was ignited by an open flame. The amount of damage was estimated at \$55,000. The defendant, a 28-year-old Caucasian male and volunteer fire fighter, was convicted on state arson charges. Sentencing is pending.

18. **Saint Therese Catholic Church (Louisville) (Western District)** - On May 1, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. Damage was estimated to be \$100. Four white juveniles, ranging in age from 15 to 18, were convicted and ordered to perform 20 hours of community volunteer work.

## **LOUISIANA**

19. **Assembly of God (Westwego) (Eastern District)** - On April 15, 1995, this Caucasian church was burned. A Caucasian male juvenile was convicted on state charges and sentenced to a youth ranch until the age of 21.

20. **Saint Genevieve Catholic Church (Thibodeaux) (Eastern District)** - On February 18, 1997, this interracial church was burned. Two Caucasian male juveniles, both 14, confessed to setting several small fires in the church. One of the juveniles was sentenced to two years with the Department of Corrections, all of which was suspended, and two years of probation. Sentencing is pending for the other juvenile.

## **21. Saint Peter's Catholic Church**

22. **Pine Prairie First Baptist Church (Pine Prairie) (Western District)** - On March 1, 1996, and February 23, 1997, these Caucasian churches were burned. The fire at the Saint Peter's Catholic Church was started after lit matches were dropped into the money box where patrons paid for candles. Fire investigator found remnants of burned paper and carpet in the library of the Pine Prairie First Baptist Church. A Caucasian male juvenile, 12, pled guilty to setting both fires. He was sentenced to a juvenile psychiatric institution for three months.

23. **New Birth Missionary Baptist Church (Lake Charles) (Western District)** - On December 10, 1996, this African-American church was burned. Boxes of old clothing that were sitting on an exterior wall of the church were set on fire. The fire spread causing minimal damage to the exterior of the church. Two African-American male juveniles, 12 and 13, pled guilty to state charges. Each was sentenced to two years of probation.

## **MAINE**

24. **Saint Anne's Catholic Church (Lisbon)** - On July 6, 1996, two minor explosive devices were set off in the parking lot of this Caucasian church. There was \$1,000 damage to the church. The defendant, a 22-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to state charges of possession and use of fireworks and received a \$25 fine.

## **MARYLAND**

25. **Thawley's Chapel (Hillsboro)** - On September 2, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. One defendant is a 19-year-old Caucasian male and the other defendant is a Caucasian juvenile, aged 13. The adult pled guilty to state charges and he was sentenced to three years of imprisonment. He was also ordered to pay restitution to the church. The juvenile was convicted on state charges and sentenced to supervised probation, counseling, and

ordered to pay restitution.

**26. John Watters Meeting House (Bel Air)** - On March 21, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned and vandalized. Four adults, three Caucasian males and one African-American male, were convicted on state charges. One defendant, 19, was sentenced in state court on arson charges. He received a 20 year sentence, of which 13 years were suspended, five years supervised probation upon release, community service and was ordered to pay restitution. The other two defendants, 18 and 19, were ordered to pay restitution and to perform community service. The fourth defendant, 20, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment (all suspended), placed on three years probation and ordered to pay restitution.

## MICHIGAN

**27. Cass Community United Methodist Church (Detroit) (Eastern District)** - On August 25, 1996, a sofa and chair in the court yard of this Caucasian church were set on fire. The damage was \$250.00. The defendant, a 20-year-old African-American male, pled guilty to state charges. He was sentenced to two years under the Home Training Act.

## MINNESOTA

**28. Brooklyn Park Evangelical Free Church (Brooklyn Park)** - On August 15, 1996, this Caucasian church was vandalized and burned. Investigators found a drawing of a five-point star and the words "Satan lives" on one of the church walls. The church had been providing counseling to juveniles and adults who are involved in satanic worship. A Caucasian juvenile, 15, confessed to starting the fire. He indicated that he felt left out of the youth group that met the previous night and committed the vandalism to get even. The defendant, who was smoking a cigarette in the storage room, claimed he was startled when someone entered and he threw the lit cigarette into a corner believing it was extinguished. He was found guilty of negligently setting the fire. Adjudication was stayed for six months pending compliance with stipulations of probation. Restitution has been made and he must now serve 150 hours of community service at the Evangelical Free Church.

**29. Grace Lutheran (Westbrook)** - On June 20, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. Two Caucasian juveniles, 10 and 12, confessed to starting the fire with matches. Both stated that they got the idea to burn the church from watching television. One of the juveniles pled guilty to second degree arson and was sentenced to 30 days in a residential facility. The other juvenile's records have been sealed.

## MISSISSIPPI

**30. Lynch Chapel United Methodist (Clinton) (Southern District)** - On November 1, 1995, this African-American church was burned. The defendant, a 19-year-old African-American male, lived next door to the church and admitted setting the fire and then notifying the fire and then notifying the fire department. The defendant pled guilty to state charges. He was sentenced to three years of imprisonment.

31. **Mallalieu Methodist Church (Meridian) (Southern District)** - On December 11, 1996, this African-American church was burned. Three Caucasian juveniles, 16, 15, and 14, forced their way into a rear door of the church and used an open flame to ignite choir robes found in the sanctuary. They also defaced the communion altar with racial epithets on the walls and doors inside the church. The juveniles pled guilty to state charges. Two of the juveniles were sentenced to an indeterminate amount of time in a training camp and sentencing is pending for the third juvenile who has been sent for a second psychiatric evaluation.

32. **Elbethel Baptist Church (Satartia) (Southern District)** - On March 30, 1996, this African-American church was burned. Firefighters were able to respond quickly and the fire was extinguished rapidly, leaving minimal damage to the outer structure. The defendant, a 37-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to state arson charges. He was sentenced to five years of imprisonment, four of which were suspended and to two years of supervised probation pending his release from prison.

## **MISSOURI**

33. **Shilo Baptist Church (Kansas City) (Western District)**

34. **Ozark Primitive Baptist (Webster County) (Western District)** - On May 5, 1996, these two Caucasian churches were burned. The churches were only occasionally used. Two Caucasian defendants, 29 and 31, were each charged by the state with two counts of arson. The defendant, 29, pled guilty to both counts and was sentenced to seven years in prison on each count to be served concurrently. Charges against the other defendant were dismissed.

35. **Amity Freewill Baptist Church (Niangua) (Western District)** - On December 30, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The entire church was destroyed. The accelerant was determined to be charcoal lighter fluid. Two Caucasian defendants, 19 and 18, pled guilty to state arson charges. Both were sentenced to seven years of imprisonment.

36. **Greers Chapel Baptist Church (Sikeston)(Eastern District)** - On September 13, 1996, this African-American church was burned. The church was completely destroyed. Two Caucasian defendants, both 18, pled guilty and were sentenced to seven years for arson and burglary charges. The third defendant, 19, is undergoing psychiatric evaluation to determine if he is competent to stand trial.

37. **New Bethel Church (Anderson) (Western District)** - On October 16, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The defendant, a 27-year-old Caucasian male, admitted setting the fire with paper and his cigarette lighter, after entering the church in order to get warm. He pled guilty to a state arson charge and was sentenced to five years of imprisonment.

## **NEVADA**

38. **Church of Christ (Henderson)** - On September 19, 1996, the siding on this African-American church was burned. The defendant, a 23-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty in federal court to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. •247(c) (civil rights). He confessed to using a lighter to initiate the fire. Witnesses stated that he attempted to burglarize the church and failed. After the failed burglary, he stated they should burn the church because its members were African-American. He was sentenced to 63 months of imprisonment, restitution, and three years of supervised probation.

## NEW YORK

39. **Temple Beth El (Rockaway) (Eastern District)**

40. **Temple Derech Emuch (Rockaway) (Eastern District)**

41. **Yeshiva of Belle (Belle Harbor) (Eastern District)** - On January 13, 1995, April 30, 1995, and May 6, 1995, respectively, these synagogues were burned. The defendant, a 41-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty and was sentenced in state court to 18 to 55 years for six counts of arson, one count of burglary, and one of count criminal mischief in connection with arson at these synagogues and at other buildings. The defendant had asked various organizations for money, and when they began refusing him he burned their buildings.

## NORTH CAROLINA

42. **Mount Tabor Baptist Church (Cerro Gordo) (Eastern District)** - On May 23, 1996, this African-American Church was burned. The defendant, a 32-year-old African-American male, pled guilty to state conspiracy and fraud charges and was sentenced to 20 months. The other defendant, 22, pled guilty to state arson charges and is scheduled to be sentenced on June 23, 1997.

43. **Matthews-Murkland Presbyterian Church (Charlotte) (Western District)** - On June 6, 1996, this African-American church was burned. The defendant, a 13-year-old Caucasian female with satanic and racist beliefs was convicted in state court and received 12 months probation and community service.

44. **Pleasant Ridge United Church of Christ (Greensboro) (Middle District)** - On June 28, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The defendant, a 19-year-old Caucasian male, was convicted in federal court after a bench trial of violating 18 U.S.C. •844 (i) and was sentenced to 30 months in prison, three years supervised release and ordered to pay restitution. Another defendant, 18, pled guilty in federal court to one count of 18 U.S.C. •844 (i). He received 20 months in prison, three years supervised release and ordered to pay restitution.

45. **Ohovah A.M.E. (Orrum)(Eastern District)** - On January 6, 1996, this African-American church was burglarized, vandalized and burned. The fire was set to cover up the burglary. The defendant, a 29-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to a state arson charge. He was sentenced to 15 to 18 months imprisonment and 36 months probation. He was ordered to pay restitution and a fine.

46. **Pleasant Hill Baptist Church (Lumberton)(Eastern District)** - On May 24, 1996, this African-American church was burned. The church sustained \$2,000 in damage. A Caucasian volunteer fireman, 17, pled guilty to state charges and was sentenced to 16 to 20 months detention which was suspended for three years of special supervised probation, 100 hours of community service work, a \$1,000 fine plus court costs and a community service fee of \$100.

47. **Beulah Land Baptist Church ( Roaring River) (Western District)** - On July 1, 1996, the Fellowship Building of the Beulah Land Baptist Church was burned. The Fellowship Building is located two and one half blocks away from the main church, which has a Caucasian congregation. Damages were estimated at \$5,000. The building was also vandalized and all the windows were broken. The defendant, a 40-year-old Caucasian male, was convicted of state arson charges and injury to real property. He was sentenced to 19 to 23 months and ordered to pay \$6,500 restitution.

48. **Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (Maysville) (Eastern District)**-On June 30, 1996, this African American church was burned. A 19-year-old Caucasian male was arrested and indicted on six federal arson charges. The defendant pled guilty to one count of 18 U.S.C. •844(i) and 844(h). Sentencing is set for July 28, 1997. Federal charges against three Caucasian juveniles remain pending.

## OHIO

49. **Ebeneezer Full Gospel Missionary Baptist Church (Canton) (Northern District)** - On

June 18, 1996, a chair was set on fire inside this African-American church. Two Caucasian male defendants, 44 and 22, pled guilty in state court. One defendant received a sentence of two years in prison. The other defendant received six months of "shock" incarceration followed by probation if the shock sentence is successfully completed.

## OREGON

50. **Immanuel Free Methodist Church (Portland)** - On June 20, 1996, this interracial church was burned. The defendant, a 21-year-old African-American male, threw two mason jar gasoline fire bombs through a church window. He pled guilty in federal court to one count of 18 U.S.C. •844(i). He received a five year sentence of imprisonment.

## PENNSYLVANIA

51. **First United Methodist Church (Middle District)(Berwick)**- On November 4, 1996, this Caucasian church was broken into and napkins and literature were set on fire. Damage was estimated at \$30,000. The defendant, a 27-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to federal charges of 18 U.S.C. •844(i). The defendant was sentenced to 27 months of imprisonment, restitution, and three years supervised probation.

## **SOUTH CAROLINA**

**52. Life Christian Assembly (North Charleston)** - On June 17, 1996, the shed behind this interracial church was burned. Two Caucasian juveniles, ages nine and ten, admitted to the arson and explained they were playing with matches and did not intend to burn the building. The juveniles were convicted and sentenced in state court to house arrest and restitution.

**53. Mount Zion A.M.E. Church (Greeleyville)**

**54. Macedonia Baptist Church (Manning)** - On June 20 and 21, 1995, respectively, these two African-American churches were burned. Four Caucasian ex-members of the Ku Klux Klan pled guilty to federal charges relating to these arsons. Two defendants, 23 and 24, received 234 months and 216 months of imprisonment, respectively, for violations of 18 U.S.C. 241 (civil rights conspiracy) and 18 U.S.C. 844(h). The sentencing for the remaining two defendants, 51 and 52, is pending.

**55. Rice Chapel (Buffalo)** - On May 8, 1994, this African-American church was burned. One defendant, a 22-year-old volunteer fire fighter, pled guilty to state charges and received a 10 year sentence of imprisonment, five of which were suspended.

**56. New Saint Paul Apostolic Church (Florence)** - On June 11, 1996, this African-American church was burned. Three Caucasian juveniles were convicted in state court. One juvenile, 10, received a sentence through pretrial diversion. He and his family must participate in the Family Preservation Program. The other two juveniles, 11 and 12, were sentenced to probation and community service.

**57. Johns Island Church (Johns Island)** - On July 16, 1996, this African-American church was burned. The building was still under construction at the time of the arson. The defendant, a 51- year-old African-American male, who was the pastor of the church, confessed to burning the building. The pastor was convicted on a state arson charge and he was sentenced to 10 years, with five years suspended and five years probation.

**58. Spring Hill AME Church (Dillon)** - On August 1, 1996, this African-American church was burned. The church was totally destroyed. Two 17-year-old Caucasian juveniles pled guilty to

state arson charges. They were sentenced under the Youthful Offender Program. One juvenile received a five year sentence and the other received a four year sentence.

## **TENNESSEE**

**59. Canaan A.M.E. Church (Maury County) (Middle District)**

60. **Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (Maury County) (Middle District)** - On January 29, 1995, these African-American churches were firebombed. Three Caucasian defendants, 33, 35 and 43, pled guilty in federal court to violating 18 U.S.C. •241(civil rights conspiracy). One defendant was sentenced to 57 months in prison while the other two defendants were sentenced to 46 months in prison.

61. **Church of the Nativity (Bartlett) (Western District)** - On June 29, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The church suffered \$10,000 in damage to the altar area. The defendant, a 46- year-old Caucasian pastor admitted setting the fire. He used a match to ignite curtains behind the alter and thereafter went to his residence until police and fire units arrived on the scene. The defendant pled guilty in federal court to one count of 18 U.S.C. •844 (i). Sentencing is pending.

62. **Saint Mary's Episcopal School (Memphis) (Western District)**

63. **Holy Communion School (Memphis)(Western District)**

64. **Shady Grove Presbyterian (Memphis)(Western District)**

65. **Colonial Park United Methodist Church (Memphis)(Western District)**

66. **Emmanuel United Methodist (Memphis)(Western District)**

67. **Calvary Baptist Church (Memphis)(Western District)** - The defendant, a 26-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty in federal court to an information charging him with multiple counts of violating of 18 U.S.C. •844 (i) in connection with the fires at these Caucasian churches which occurred on October 16, 1995, November 30, 1995, December 1, 1995, December 5, 1995, and April 20, 1996, respectively. Sentencing is pending.

68. **Church of God of Prophecy (Dyersburg) (Western District)** - On July 22, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The defendant, a 20-year-old African-American male, pled guilty in federal court to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. •247(c) (civil rights). He was sentenced to 60 months in prison.

## TEXAS

69. **Victory Baptist Church (Denison) (Eastern District)** - On June 5, 1995, this African-American church was burned. The defendant, a 26-year-old Caucasian male, admitted to using squirt bottles of gasoline to ignite two window sills at the church. The defendant pled guilty to eight state arson charges for several incidents, including this church, and was sentenced to 10 years probation on each charge, to run concurrently.

70. **Audubon Park Baptist Church/ New Revelation Mission (Garland)(Northern District)** -On July 11, 1996, this interracial church was

burned. The defendant, a 33-year-old Caucasian male, admitted to pouring gasoline on the pulpit and igniting the accelerant. The defendant pled guilty in federal court to one count of 18 U.S.C. •844(i) and was sentenced to five years of imprisonment and ordered to pay restitution. He stated that he was angry about the failure of the church's counseling.

71. **Real Rock Church (Houston)(Southern District)**- On February 2, 1996, this African-American church was burned. A ten-year-old African-American male admitted to setting the fire by throwing an ignited piece of paper onto a rug located inside the church. He was convicted in state court and sentenced to probation. He violated his probation and was sent to a residential care facility.

72. **Church of the Living God (Greenville)(Northern District)** - On June 10, 1996, this African-American church was burned. The defendant, an 18-year-old African-American male, entered a guilty plea to one count of 18 U.S.C. •844(i) and was sentenced to eight months time served and three years supervised release.

73. **Macedonia Baptist Church (Bristol) (Northern District)** - On March 22, 1997, this African-American church was burned. Two Caucasian male defendants confessed to setting the fire using gasoline and a cigarette lighter. One defendant, 25, pled guilty to violating 18 U.S.C. •844 (i) and 18 U.S.C. •247(c) (civil rights). The other defendant, 22, pled guilty to violating 18 U.S.C. •844(i) and 18 U.S.C. •241 (civil rights conspiracy). Sentencing is scheduled for July 18, 1997.

## UTAH

74. **Templo Casa De Oracion (Salt Lake)** - On March 28, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The defendant, a 32-year-old Caucasian female, pled guilty to state charges. After a 90 day mental evaluation, she was sentenced to a half-way house and ordered to pay \$38,000 in restitution.

## VIRGINIA

75. **Green Run Baptist Church (Virginia Beach) (Eastern District)** - On June 18, 1996, this interracial church was burned. Two Caucasian juveniles, 16 and 13, were found guilty in state court of two counts of arson and one count of conspiracy. One juvenile was sentenced to five and one-half months of imprisonment and placed on probation for two years, while the other was sentenced to 10 days of detention at the same facility. Both were ordered to pay restitution.

76. **First Baptist Church of Centralia (Chesterfield) (Eastern District)** - On April 16, 1996, this African-American church was burned. A 16-year-old Caucasian female and two Caucasian adults, both 20, (one male and one female) pled guilty to state charges. One defendant was sentenced to five years of imprisonment. All but six months of the sentence was suspended.

77. **Bethany Baptist Church (Portsmouth)(Eastern District)** - On August 14, 1995, this Caucasian church was burned. The defendant, a 34-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to state charges. The defendant was sentenced to five years of imprisonment. All but six months of the sentence was suspended.

## WASHINGTON

78. **Naval Air Station Chapel (Whidbey Island-Oak Harbor) (Western District)** - On January 21, 1996, this interracial church was burned. The defendant, a 23-year-old African-American male, was convicted on federal charges in the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station Court. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment and ordered to pay a fine.

## OTHER ACTS OF VIOLENCE

### NORTH CAROLINA

79. **China Grove A.M.E. Zion Church**

80. **Flora Williams Ministries (Charlotte)(Western District)** - On April 3, 1996 and May 19, 1996, these African-American churches received racially threatening messages on their telephone answering machines. Two Caucasian defendants, 22 and 21, pled guilty in federal court to violating one count of 18 U.S. C. •241(civil rights conspiracy). Sentencing is pending.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

81. **Hammond Grove Baptist Church (North Augusta)** - On March 8, 1995, this African-American church was vandalized. The vandalism consisted of racial insults and swastikas being written on the walls with a magic marker and the destruction of property within the church amounting to over \$20,000 in damages. Two Caucasian juveniles, ages 14 and 16, were convicted in state court and sentenced to six months probation and restitution.

### TENNESSEE

82. **Mount Ararat Missionary Baptist Church (Trezevant)** - On June 14, 1996, this African-American church was vandalized by the spray painting of racial epithets. The defendant, an 18-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to state charges and was sentenced to 30 days of imprisonment and supervised release for one year.

83. **Parker's Chapel (Memphis) (Western District)** - On August 5, 1996, this African-American church was damaged by two gun shots. One

defendant, a 19-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty to one count of a federal firearms violation, 18 U.S.C. •922(j) and was sentenced to two years probation and ordered to pay restitution. A juvenile white male was convicted of one count of 18 U.S.C. •922(x)2 and has been sentenced to one year of probation. This was last updated on August 25, 1998